

ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

23 November 1984

ARTICLE APPEARED

ON PAGE 8A

UGA professor keeps eye on CIA

By Kent Hannon

Staff Writer

ATHENS — The chance to ask a real flesh-and-blood representative of the Central Intelligence Agency about covert action abroad was too much for the student in the back of the University of Georgia classroom to resist.

"Were y'all involved in trying to rescue the hostages in Iran?" asked the student.

"I really can't discuss that," said Art Hulnick, a public affairs officer for the CIA who spent two days talking to political science students on the UGA campus this week.

In fact, nothing that Hulnick said about the CIA during three different lectures Monday and Tuesday — on topics ranging from the Bay of Pigs invasion to the infamous Nicaraguan training manual — was very revealing. Nor, he said, could any of his remarks be quoted in the press, according to CIA policy.

For the benefit of questioners like the curious student in the back of the room, it was fortunate that the man who invited Hulnick to campus, political science Professor Loch Johnson, was willing and able to fill in some of the gaps.

"It's a matter of public record that the CIA worked with Canada to try to get some U.S. diplomats out of Iran before the 55 hostages were taken," said Johnson after Hulnick declined to answer the students' question. "It's in Jimmy Carter's memoirs."

Johnson's knowledge of how the CIA operates goes well beyond reading Jimmy Carter's memoirs. From 1975-76, Johnson was chief assistant to Sen. Frank Church on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Church's committee spent 16 months investigating CIA abuses of power, from spying on Americans who opposed the Vietnam War to assassination plots against Fidel Castro. The

findings of Church's committee led to the establishment of permanent intelligence committees in both houses of Congress which, according to Johnson, have brought about the "democratization of the CIA."

"I don't mean there isn't still some slippage down the chain of command with people who are known in CIA language as 'cowboys' who are real wild men," says Johnson. "That's evident in the case of the Nicaraguan manual that apparently contains references to assassination techniques. But now, before the CIA can undertake any covert action it has to get clearance from its own operations director and written permission from the director of the CIA and from the President of the United States."

"Then the director has to go up to Capitol Hill and explain to both the Senate and House intelligence committees what the CIA wants to do. It's a new system that builds in accountability."

The new system is one that Johnson had a direct hand in shaping, having served as staff director of one of the subcommittees of the House's permanent committee on intelligence from 1977-79. His tours of duty on both committees led to his forthcoming book, to be published in April by the University Press of Kentucky, titled, "A Season of Inquiry: The Senate Intelligence Investigation."

The best-known book about the CIA thus far, Johnson says, is "The Cult of Intelligence," a mid-1970s expose written by a former CIA officer and a former state department intelligence officer.

"The book became famous because it was censored by the CIA," says Johnson. "The authors submitted it to the CIA for authorization and the CIA excised portions of it. It

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"My book will be different in that it's more dispassionate and objective. It's not an expose, and yet it contains information from Sen. Church's hearings — information about CIA assassination plots against an Iraqi general, Patrice Lumumba of The Congo and several attempts on Fidel Castro's life — that a lot of Americans have probably never read about."

Johnson's experience in Washington included a job as issues director for Sen. Church's campaign for the 1976 Presidential nomination. He also prepared a number of materials that Jimmy Carter used to prepare for his 1980 debate with Ronald Reagan.

Johnson's reputation as a strong teacher who makes learning fun is enhanced by occasional antics which are a clear and deliberate departure from his normally restrained and somewhat formal demeanor.

In honor of Hulnick's visit to class, for example, Johnson wore a trenchcoat and dark glasses and en-

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